

What is claimed is:

1. A lip keeper support system for use with a dock leveler having a pivotal lip, comprising:
a lip holder comprising at least two lip supporting positions.
2. A lip keeper support system according to claim 1, wherein the lip holder further comprises at least one body defining or carrying at least one lip supporting position.
3. A lip keeper support system according to claim 2, wherein the at least one body is at least a first body and a second body, the first body defining or carrying a first lip supporting position and the second body defining or carrying a second lip supporting position.
4. A lip keeper support system according to claim 2, wherein the at least one body defines or carries at least two lip supporting positions.
5. A lip keeper support system according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the at least two lip supporting positions defines or carries a lip retaining portion.
6. A lip keeper support system according to claim 5, wherein each of the at least two lip supporting positions defines or carries a lip retaining portion.
7. A lip keeper support system according to 5, wherein the at least one of the at least two lip supporting positions includes a raised area and a recessed area, and wherein the raised area is the lip retaining portion.

8. A lip keeper support system according to claim 6, wherein each of the at least two lip supporting positions has a profile chosen from a U-shaped profile, a V-shaped profile, and L-shaped profile, or a modified L-shaped profile having an angle greater than ninety degrees.
9. A lip keeper support system according to claim 1, wherein the at least two supporting positions is a first supporting position and a second supporting position, and the second supporting position is displaced from the first supporting position vertically and horizontally.
10. A lip keeper support system according to claim 1, wherein the lip holder comprises at least three lip supporting positions.
11. A dock leveler, comprising:
 - a ramp;
 - a lip pivotally attached to the ramp; and
 - a lip holder comprising at least two lip supporting positions, wherein each of the at least two lip supporting positions is configured to engage the lip.
12. A dock leveler according to claim 11, wherein the lip is configured to pivot from a raised position to a pendant position through various lowered positions, and the at least two lip supporting positions includes a first lip supporting position configured to engage the lip in the pendant position, and a second lip supporting position configured to engage the lip in a lowered position.
13. A dock leveler according to claim 11, wherein the at least two lip supporting positions includes a first lip supporting position and a second lip supporting position, the first lip supporting position is configured to cooperate

with the lip to support the ramp in a substantially dock level position, and the second lip supporting position is configured to cooperate with the lip to support the ramp at a first below dock level position.

14. A dock leveler according to claim 11, wherein the dock leveler is an upwardly-biased, mechanically-operated dock leveler.

15. A dock leveler according to claim 11, further comprising at least one support leg apparatus for supporting the ramp at a below dock level position.

16. A dock leveler according to claim 15, wherein the support leg apparatus comprises a support leg biased toward a forward position, configured to retract when the ramp falls slower than a predetermined rate, and configured to maintain the forward position when the ramp falls at or greater than a predetermined rate.

17. A dock leveler according to claim 15, wherein the support leg apparatus is configured to support the ramp at a first and a second below dock level position, and the support leg apparatus comprises a support leg configured to pivot from a forward position to a retracted position through intermediate positions, wherein the support leg retracts toward the retracted position when the ramp falls slower than a predetermined rate, maintains the forward position when the ramp falls at or greater than a predetermined rate toward the first below dock level position, maintains an intermediate support position if the support leg has begun to retract toward the retracted position and then falls at or greater than a predetermined rate toward the second below dock level position.

18. A dock leveler according to claim 13, wherein the dock leveler further comprises a support leg apparatus for supporting the ramp at a second below dock level position which is lower than the first below dock level position.

19. A dock leveler according to claim 18, wherein the support leg apparatus comprises at least one automatically-retracting, forwardly-biased support leg.

20. A lip keeper support system for use with a dock leveler having a pivotable lip, comprising:

a multi-tiered lip holder means for engaging the lip and supporting the dock leveler at more than one position.

21. A lip keeper support system according to claim 20, wherein the multi-tiered lip holder means comprises at least one body defining or carrying at least one lip supporting position.

22. A lip keeper support system according to claim 21, wherein the at least one body is at least a first body defining or carrying a first lip supporting position and at least a second body defining or carrying a second lip supporting position.

23. A lip keeper support system according to claim 22, wherein the at least one body defines or carries at least two lip supporting positions.

24. A method of supporting a dock leveler having a lip pivotally mounted to ramp, comprising:

securing a first lip engagement apparatus below the ramp in a location wherein the first lip engagement apparatus engages the lip when the lip is in a pendant position and the ramp is in a substantially dock level position, and

securing a second lip engagement apparatus below the ramp at a location wherein the second lip engagement apparatus engages the lip if the lip should miss the first lip engagement apparatus and continue to a below dock level position.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the below dock level position is about 2.5 inches below dock level.

26. The method of claim 24, wherein the first lip engagement apparatus and the second lip engagement apparatus are a single unit such that the step of securing the first lip engagement apparatus and the step of securing the second lip engagement are simultaneous.

27. A support system for supporting a dock leveler, comprising:
a support leg carrier pivotally attached to the ramp;
a support leg attached to the support leg carrier and configured to move via the support leg carrier between a ramp supporting position and a retracted position;
a cam attached to the support leg and biased to a first position; and
a camming surface located below the ramp and positioned to communicate with the cam to guide the cam along the camming surface as the ramp descends, wherein the cam is configured to move to a second position when the ramp descends at or faster than a predetermined speed,
wherein the support leg retracts when the cam maintains the first position while the cam moves along the camming surface and the support leg maintains the support position when the cam moves to the second position.

28. The support system of claim 27, further comprising:
a catch plate attached to the support leg; and
a catch bar located below the catch plate and configured to catch the catch bar when the support leg has maintained the support position and has lowered to a predetermined position.
29. The support system of claim 27, further comprising a support lug located beneath the ramp and positioned to support the support leg when the support leg is in the support position and the ramp has lowered to a predetermined position.
30. The support system of claim 29, further comprising a lip stop attached to the ramp and configured to rest on the support leg and transfer the at least some of the weight associated with the ramp to the support leg when the support leg is supporting the ramp.
31. The support system of claim 30, wherein the lip stop is a stop limiting the pivotal movement of the lip.
32. The support system of claim 27, further comprising a connecting bar attached to the support leg connecting the support leg to a second support leg.
33. The support system of claim 27, further comprising a retracting bar attached to the support leg and configured to retract the support leg when the retracting bar is subjected to a lifting force.
34. A lip keeper support system according to claim 2, wherein the at least one body is at least a first body and a second body, the first body defining or carrying

a first lip supporting position and the second body defining or carrying a first lip retaining portion for retaining the lip in the first supporting position.

35. The support system of claim 27 further comprising:

a second support leg carrier pivotally attached to the ramp located adjacent from the support leg carrier;

a second support leg attached to the second support leg carrier and configured to move via the second support leg carrier between a ramp supporting position and a retracted position;

a second cam attached to the second support leg and biased to a first position; and

a second camming surface located below the ramp and positioned to communicate with the second cam to guide the second cam along the second camming surface as the ramp descends, wherein the second cam is configured to move to a second position when the ramp descends at or faster than a predetermined speed,

wherein the second support leg retracts when the second cam maintains the first position while the second cam moves along the second camming surface and the second support leg maintains the support position when the second cam moves to the second position.

36. The dock leveler of claim 19, wherein at least one support leg has at least two support positions.